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## **Work programme 2012-2013**

### **Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLI)**

**Council for the Rural Area, Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the VROM Council**

### **About the Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure**

The Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure (*Raden voor de Leefomgeving en Infrastructuur*, RLI) advise the Dutch government and Parliament on strategic issues that are concerned with our overall living and working environment. Three separate councils work together under the RLI umbrella: the Council for Rural Areas; the Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management; and the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. The Councils are independent, and offer solicited and unsolicited advice on long-term issues of strategic importance to the Netherlands. Through their advice, the Councils aim to contribute to a broadening and deepening of the political and public debate, and to greater quality in decision-making.

The Councils operate according to a joint work schedule and are supported by the RLI Secretariat.

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## 1. Foreword

This document presents the joint work programme of the Council for the Rural Area, the Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the VROM Council. The Councils anticipate a full merger to form the Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure, whereupon they are already working together to develop an integrated approach to the physical domain. Experience of cooperation to date confirms the Councils' view that their integration will provide added value.

This work programme sets out the priorities as established in mid-2011. The dynamic nature of government policy (on issues as the *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte* (National Policy Strategy for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning), the 'top sectors' and public housing) may well lead to new requests for advice. Accordingly, the programme allows for further topics and activities to be added at a later date. During the latter half of 2011, meetings will be held with the ministers and state secretaries of the relevant departments – Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM), Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) and the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) to discuss the further content of the programme. The work programme 2012-2013 allows for approximately ten topics to be examined in detail, resulting in the production of an advisory report on each. Seven topics have already been confirmed (one of which will be addressed in the form of an advisory letter rather than a full advisory report). An international conference is also to be organized.

This work programme has been produced following consultation with the ministries of IENM, EL&I and BZK (specifically the Directorate-General for Housing, Communities and Integration), the Standing Committees for IENM, EL&I and BZK, and discussions between the councils' members. Four topics are derived from the previous work programme (2011-2012), whereby the terms of reference have been updated. There are three entirely new topics. In preparation for the discussions with the ministries, a further six potential advice topics have been identified and are presented in Section 4.

The work programme focuses on the advisory domains of the Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLI), as established by statute per September 2011. It is possible that the RLI's remit will be expanded over the coming months to include (parts of) policy areas which are currently addressed by the Hazardous Substances Council of the Netherlands (AGS) and the Dutch Energy Council (AER). If and when new statutory tasks are assigned to the RLI, the work programme will be amended accordingly.



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## 2. Long-term programming

The social and societal challenges for the medium to long-term are unlikely to change drastically in the foreseeable future. However, the political standpoints with regard to those challenges are indeed likely to change, as will opinions regarding the most appropriate approaches. For this reason, the nature of the advice which government and parliament seek from the strategic advisory councils will also change. There will be different terms of reference. This work programme takes this fact fully into account. It will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary. The Councils will be able to address emerging developments as the programme allows room for new advice topics to be added.

### Relationship between the work programme and policy

The Councils wish to establish a close interrelationship between their activities, social developments and government policy. The government has issued several documents which set out the main points of its policy on the aspects which fall within the RLI's purview:

- Policy letter *Infrastructuur en milieu* ('Infrastructure and the Environment'), 26 November 2010, the main points of which are:
  - a clear focus on economic growth through a strengthening of the national mainports, brainports and greenports;
  - decentralization and updating of policy: the assignment of clear responsibilities, with greater opportunity for initiatives undertaken by local government, the private sector and the general public, whereby the government will strive to create realistic preconditions for a sustainable and climate-proof future;
  - vigorous implementation; simplification of legislation and procedures, with greater attention devoted to the actual progress of projects.
  
- Policy letter *Naar de top* ('Towards the top'), 4 February 2011, which sets out policy addressing the private sector and the subsequent advisory reports of the 'top teams'. The main points are:
  - an innovation policy which is more demand-led (by the private sector itself) with fewer specific subsidies, a generic reduction of the administrative burden, and greater opportunity for private initiative. This approach addresses nine specific 'top sectors': the creative industry, logistics, horticulture, agrifood, life sciences, energy, water, chemicals and the high-tech sector.
  
- *Woonvisie* ('Vision document on Housing'), 1 July 2011, which sets out:
  - proposals for a more targeted and effective use of government policy and measures;
  - new policy addressing certain sections of the housing market, intended to restore confidence.
  
- Policy letter *Eenvoudig beter* ('Simply better'), 28 June 2011, addressing environmental legislation. The main points are:
  - a full review of existing environmental law with a view to achieving greater integration, simplification, modernization and efficiency, in the broadest sense of the term;
  - shortening of procedures and decision-making processes, streamlining and integration of planning forms, a more effective approach to mandatory investigations and consultation, with greater room for discretion in administrative decisions.

- Other key points of the government's Coalition Agreement which are currently being refined include:
  - the desire to achieve the ambitions and objectives in the physical domain at lower cost;
  - an energy structure which is 'greener' and less reliant on other countries;
  - a reassessment of nature policy;
  - the pursuit of economic growth through improved mobility and accessibility.

The Councils have also sought to take the government's broader strategic themes into account, even where not directly relevant to their advisory role. These themes include:

- the Netherlands' position within the changing global arena;
- the Netherlands' competitive strength;
- medium and long-term domestic budget objectives;
- a new division of responsibility between state and society, to include a new balance between rights and obligations;
- new social divisions and the resultant disquiet (a new social issue);
- managing the scarcity of space and (natural) resources.

Finally, the work programme also takes into account the common themes which the president of the Scientific Council for Government Policy drew to the attention of ministers when presenting the work programmes for 2011, doing so on behalf of all strategic advisory councils. These themes are:

- the strong interrelationship between national policy and decision-making at European level;
- the risks and opportunities of Internet 2.0 and the social media in terms of information provision and communication;
- demographic trends: population shrinkage and the resultant decrease in the number of households in an growing number of regions, together with ongoing population ageing.

The Councils have distilled the developments outlined above to form the following key challenges in the physical domain in the medium to long term:

- Increasing the Netherlands' competitive strength by strengthening the national mainports, brainports and greenports, and by offering greater opportunity for the private sector and society at large to exercise their capacity for change. The Netherlands must seek to establish a leading position in the changing global arena.
- Finding an appropriate response to significant trends and developments such as the growing scarcity of space (including green space) and resources, climate change, population shrinkage and ageing, and their influence in terms of important societal interests such as food security, housing, accessibility and mobility, sustainable energy and nature.
- A reassessment of the division of responsibility for the physical domain between individuals, the private sector, societal midfield organizations, national government and European or global institutions. This will entail establishing a new balance between rights and obligations, while taking into account shifting social dividing lines based on education, income, culture, personal philosophies, world views and lifestyles.
- The achievement of ambitions and objectives in the physical domain at lower cost, and with fewer rules and procedures.



These challenges have informed the choice of topics to be included in the work programme and will also guide the process of examining those topics to result in the production of the Councils' advisory reports.

### **Advice topics**

Four topics which formed part of the work programme 2011-2012 are to be retained, although the terms of reference have been updated. Three topics are entirely new. Six potential new topics have been identified.

The Councils also work on products and publications other than the advisory reports. One example is the anthology of essays about the relationship between human health, veterinary health and the environment, produced as a joint project which also involves the Netherlands Centre for Ethics and Health, the Council for Public Health and Health Care and the Council on Animal Affairs. In September 2012, the RLI will host the annual conference of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC), the key theme of which will be sustainable mobility.

### ***Advice topics retained from the previous work programme (2011-2012)***

1. The future of the city
2. A human environment without growth
3. Nature and landscape
4. The logistic strength of the Netherlands and sustainable mobility

### ***New advice topics***

5. Fundamental revision of environmental legislation
6. Sustainable lifestyles
7. Fresh water usage (advisory letter)

Activities for the remainder of 2011 and 2012 have been scheduled as follows:

	Sep 2011	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2012	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
<b>Ongoing projects</b>																	
1) The future of the city																	P
2) A human environment without growth				R										P			
3) Nature and landscape									P								
4a) The logistic strength of the Netherlands										P				C			
4b) EEAC conference on sustainable mobility																	
<b>New projects</b>																	
5) Fundamental revision of environmental legislation								P									
6) Sustainable lifestyles																	
7) Fresh water usage (advisory letter)												A					

P = Publication

A = Advisory letter

C = Conference

R = Research/exploratory survey

### 3. Advice topics

#### Advice topics retained from the work programme 2011-2012

##### 1. The future of the city

Since 2008, the population of the world's towns and cities has exceeded that of the rural areas. Cities are very dynamic places, due in part to the sheer number of people who live or work in them, visit as tourists or pass through them every day. They are also dynamic in the sense that cities are constantly reinventing themselves. The city of today is not the same as it was thirty years ago. Some buildings have a new function while others have been replaced altogether. The 'future-proof' city must constantly adapt to cope with changing demands and an ever greater influx of people.

There are numerous questions and issues surrounding the city and its sustainability. Some relate to environmental or energy aspects, while others are social or economic in nature. Because cities are the motor of the national economy (see for example the scenario study *Netherlands 2040*, published by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis/CPB in 2010), ongoing attention must be devoted to their economic profile and image, infrastructure, mobility and accessibility, business climate and (international) competitive strength. Parliament has requested the RLI to examine the (over-) programming of office and commercial property. At the social level, the Councils have noted issues concerning social housing, criminality and public safety. To address the problems in a cohesive and coordinated manner is a challenge facing all towns, cities and urban regions.

The Councils intend to produce an advisory report which addresses the various issues in combination. They will attempt to find new paradigms which will help when thinking about the future of the city. The resultant advisory report will examine the challenges facing the city in the context of the wider region, and the relationship between the city and that region. The modern city is no longer a clearly delineated built-up area with one clearly identifiable centre. We now see the development of differentiated urban regions with several focal points and a wide range of different types of space in between. The networks in which cities operate are increasingly transnational and international in nature. This is the context which will determine, at least in part, the tasks to be undertaken and the challenges to be met. Where relevant, the RLI will seek cooperation with the Dutch Council for Social Development and the planning agencies. The advisory report will cover areas which fall under the responsibility of the ministries of Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM), Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) and the Interior and Kingdom Relations (specifically the Directorate-General for Housing, Communities and Integration). The terms of reference will therefore be formulated in association with these departments. The project is scheduled to commence in September 2011.

## **2. A human environment without growth**

Investments in the physical human environment will be significantly reduced in the years ahead, as the government reduces its budgetary spending. However, investment capacity for spatial development will be curtailed to an even greater degree by slower economic growth in combination with demographic trends, notably population shrinkage. In the post-war years, local authorities could generate significant revenue through the development of new expansion zones, whereupon that revenue could be used to finance other public investments. This avenue of opportunity will soon be closed. Accordingly, local authorities will have fewer resources with which to invest in the quality of the human environment, although such investment will certainly remain necessary. Restructuring and regeneration are still essential: an increasing number of post-war districts, both residential and commercial, are no longer able to meet the wishes and requirements of modern users. Moreover, an attractive human environment is an essential success factor if our mainports, brainports, greenports and other urban regions are to compete effectively on the international stage.

In the advisory report *De leefomgeving zonder groei* ('A human environment without growth'), the Councils will attempt to identify ways to secure the quality of the human environment in times of declining economic growth. What financing models can be applied to achieve the desired level of quality? What role can housing corporations play in this process? The report will examine the regional differences in terms of growth, stagnation and contraction which can emerge in the decades ahead. It will also attempt to find an appropriate approach for those regions (such as the Randstad conurbation) which are expected to see continued growth at first, but which will later experience stagnation and contraction.

The advisory report will cover aspects which fall under the responsibility of the ministries of Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM), Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) and the Interior and Kingdom Relations (specifically the Directorate for Housing, Communities and Integration). Cooperation will be sought with the Council for Public Administration (ROB) and the Financial Relations Council (Rfv). The project is scheduled to commence in 2011.

## **3. Nature and landscape**

The objectives of nature policy must be realized through radical changes to the current implementation strategy. Recent policy developments form the basis for the updating of the terms of reference for this topic as stated in the previous work programme 2011-2012 being a simplification of the green areas categorization system.

The government's new nature policy adopts a different implementation strategy. Past policy, and the investments in new nature areas made by national government, Europe, regional authorities and land management organizations, have not had the desired effect. The national and international objectives in terms of nature policy remain unaltered.

Among the key points of the new strategy are the realization of a national 'National Ecological Network' (EHS) by 2018. Although smaller in scale than the EHS considered feasible under the previous policy, the proposed structure will be of comparable or even higher quality. Efforts will focus on accelerating the process of its creation rather than on the acquisition of land. There are now less resources available for land purchase, for its conversion to nature areas and for the management of those areas. Responsibility for the implementation of nature policy now passes to the regional (provincial) authorities. The relevant legislation is to be simplified and integrated with general environmental legislation. The opportunities offered by European legislation will be exploited in full. The support of private landowners will be sought by giving them greater direct responsibility, and by increasing investment in nature development. The new strategy also gives private landowners and the agricultural sector a greater role in nature management. The conflict of interests between agriculture and nature must be resolved. The overall package of policy

changes demands a long-term vision of how the objectives of biodiversity are to be achieved and maintained.

The government's guiding principle is to ensure full compliance with all international obligations concerning biodiversity. How can the national objectives and European obligations be met under the new strategy? What other social functions could nature perform in future? What opportunities will be created by linking nature policy to economic and water management policy, by the further integration of legislation, by new financing structures and new knowledge-sharing structures? What will be the role of sectoral area policy (e.g. Natura 2000 and EHS), species conservation policy, nature and environmental education, and the way in which nature management is organized? The resultant advisory report will cover aspects which are the responsibility of the ministries of Infrastructure and the Environment (IenM) and Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I). The project is scheduled to commence in September 2011.

#### **4. The logistic strength of the Netherlands and sustainable mobility**

##### *a) Logistic strength*

The logistic strength of the Netherlands is one of the key factors determining its ability to compete, and hence the country's economic development. A strong logistics sector is essential to the success of the other economic (top) sectors. If the logistics sector is not performing well, the Netherlands as a whole cannot function properly. However, logistics should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. The role of the logistics sector is to facilitate the other sectors. In doing so, the logistics sector contributes some 8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Current and future developments, such as the rapid emergence of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as economic powers, shifts in the global trading flows, climate change and individualization, force us to redouble efforts to maintain and increase the strength of the Dutch logistics sector.

The logistics 'top team' includes representatives of the private sector (including the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise sector), the research field and the government. It has identified the action required in the short, medium and long terms in order to ensure that the Netherlands can excel in logistics. In the forthcoming advisory report, the Councils will endorse the top team's recommendations and will consider possible further action in a broader, long-term perspective.

In that long term, the logistic strength of the Netherlands will be determined by an approach which combines the interests of 'Profit' (to include positioning within national and international networks), 'Planet' (the sustainability and robustness of the logistics system) and 'People' (the sustainability of the production-consumption chain, and the required skills and knowledge).

The purpose of the Councils' advice is to identify the instruments which will enable the government, the research field and the private sector to organize the country's logistic strength efficiently, in a way which will provide the best possible support to all other sectors.

The questions to be addressed are likely to include:

- What are the logistic requirements of the various sectors? How can these requirements be met in the most efficient, effective and sustainable manner?
- At what point in the logistics chain is or can the greatest added value for the Netherlands be achieved?
- What factors determine multinationals' choice of certain logistic networks?
- How can the logistics system as a whole be made fully robust?
- What, where and how: the synchromodal hubs.

- Can the logistics chains be structured in a more sustainable way? (Encouraging re-use and recycling of materials, 'local for local' networks, the influence of social factors on the business climate and choice of business location).

*b) International conference on Sustainable Mobility*

To ensure that the Netherlands has adequate economic competitive strength in the long term demands that transport, of both passengers and goods, is made fully sustainable. In 2012, the RLI will host the annual conference of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) at which the key theme will be 'sustainable mobility'. The conference results may well give rise to questions which will form the basis of an advisory report to be completed in late 2012 or early 2013. These questions may relate to the (further) development of efficient multi-modal networks or the promotion of new working practices (such as telecommuting and remote conferencing) which reduce the demand for mobility.

**New advice topics**

**5. Fundamental revision of environmental legislation**

The government wishes to simplify procedures whereby regional development projects can be undertaken more quickly and efficiently. It is now apparent that the intentions go beyond a mere streamlining of the current arrangements; there is to be a fundamental revision of the legislative framework for environmental management which will also affect the recently amended framework for spatial planning. In the first half of 2012, the government will present a bill for a new Environment Act, the intention being to shorten procedures and accelerate decision-making processes, reduce the number of planning forms through a process of integration, introduce a more effective system for studies and consultation, and to create more room for administrative discretion. The proposed new Act will incorporate many of the existing legislative instruments, including the Spatial Planning Act, the Water Act, the Infrastructure (Planning Procedures) Act, and the various statutes governing nature and environmental management and building directives.

In this strategic advisory, the Councils are not so much concerned with the legislative and legal implications of the proposals, but rather with the overall approach to planning, conservation, nature development and protection, policy implementation and enforcement within the physical domain. There are likely to be new dilemmas in terms of the division of responsibilities. Similarly, there could be a conflict of interests between the desire to safeguard the basic qualities (based in part on obligations imposed by the European framework directives), and the wish to offer greater opportunity for private and market initiatives intended to achieve specific environmental qualities. In short, a new approach is required, in which attention is also devoted to the regulation of temporary usage and the prompt issuance of permits.

A fundamental revision which seeks to simplify current legislation must not lose sight of the intended purpose of environmental law, some of which is derived from the European level. How can this be reconciled with the desire to create more room for administrative discretion? Could a programmatic approach provide a solution, and will it be possible to abandon the traditional 'hard' norms, which have been known to create significant barriers to the realization of projects? What effect would such an approach have in terms of *ex ante* assessments and subsequent enforcement action?

The integration of the various aspects of environmental law also forces us to examine the extent to which we can rely on an area-specific or a project-oriented approach. Similarly, the changing relationship between the government and society (whereby there will be a greater role for the general public, the private sector and the societal midfield) may lead to an amendment of the legislative framework governing the rights of the various parties and their part in planning

processes. It is possible that voluntary agreements and covenants will come to play a more significant role than is currently the case. It is therefore necessary to examine whether agreements with societal organizations and/or project initiators should be given some legislative basis and whether protection under administrative law could be an appropriate option.

In short, the integration of the various objectives, values and procedural requirements in a single Environment Act demands careful thought about the most appropriate structure of the resultant legislation, how it is to take current social developments into account, how public health and safety is to be protected, and how the requirement for protection in law is to be met. The Councils' advice on the proposed fundamental revision has been requested by the relevant ministries as well as by the Standing Committee for Infrastructure and the Environment. Parliament has asked for an indication of the degree of detailing required within the regulations governing local area development plans (the intention being to create greater development opportunity), a request which can be included in the Councils' deliberations.

The Councils therefore intend to examine the questions outlined above in a broad context to arrive at practical solutions which will assist in the further development of new environmental legislation. The resultant advisory report will cover aspects which are the direct responsibility of the ministries of Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM), Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) and the Interior and Kingdom Relations (specifically the Directorate for Housing, Communities and Integration). Insofar as aspects of health and safety are concerned, the advice will also be relevant to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS). To ensure that the process runs parallel with that of drafting the bill, the project will commence in September 2011, with the (initial) report scheduled for publication during the first half of 2012. Some of the relevant questions were to be addressed within the planned follow-up to the 'Future of Spatial Policy' advisory report but will now be incorporated into the current project.

## **6. Sustainable lifestyles**

Many initiatives designed to promote the sustainable society have been undertaken by private individuals, organizations and companies. The Netherlands possesses the social strength necessary to rise to the challenges of sustainable development. Making full use of this strength is also essential to the country's economic development, certainly in the longer term.

Sustainable lifestyle choices are now being made in many domains of the human environment, including diet and nutrition, health, housing, recreation and mobility. Literally thousands of initiatives are being introduced in quick succession, but a robust tipping point – the adoption of sustainability as the norm – has not yet been reached. Will all these societal initiatives combined provide the required critical mass, or is some additional catalyst required? It seems likely that the development of the sustainable society will be ever more dependent on the strength of private individuals, societal organizations and companies, and less reliant on government funding or regulation. How can the government facilitate and empower society in its pursuit of sustainable development and the resultant competitive edge?

What can society itself do to promote the green economy while ensuring long-term business continuity and a level playing field for corporate investments in sustainability? What part do individual lifestyle choices play? What can societal organizations such as housing corporations and consumer groups contribute? Now that the government has opted to exert less direct control, is there sufficient willingness on the part of individuals, societal organisations, companies to accept greater responsibility and to establish the sustainable lifestyle as the norm? How can those sectors which are not yet at the cutting edge of sustainable innovation – such as the construction industry – be encouraged to change and advance? Which aspects require individual attention and which should be dealt with within an integrated approach which draws on the strength of a collective awareness?



The Councils' advisory report will present and discuss experience gained elsewhere, including Germany and the Scandinavian countries. It will further consider the (cost) effectiveness of attempting to tap the strength of society itself at the European scale. The report will devote attention to the trend whereby governments no longer command the automatic respect and confidence of the public. It will also consider the relationship between the value attached to sustainability by society and the growing understanding of the challenges that await, and of the difficulty inherent in practical initiatives. One of the Councils' aims in this programme will be to refine the findings of the exploratory report 'The energetic society', produced by the PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (2011) to form clear proposals for action enabling the government to facilitate societal initiatives.

## **7. Freshwater usage (advisory letter)**

The availability and usage of fresh water will become ever more important in the decades ahead. The challenges involved will become more complex and will demand effort on the part of various sectors within the physical domain. The economic importance of fresh water usage will also increase.

The intensification of land use, climate change and more stringent usage requirements result in greater competition for fresh water. In catchment areas, we already see competition between functions such as water defences, subsoil management (compaction and subsidence), nature conservation, drinking water abstraction, energy, agriculture (particularly capital-intensive crops), process water, shipping, industry, water recreation, and freshwater fishing. In terms of the distribution of fresh water, there is also competition between catchment areas in the Netherlands and this competition will eventually extend to the international level. Restrictions to the ready availability of fresh water are already becoming visible. Other public interests, such as energy production, are now more dependent on good water management, whereby a period of drought will have even more serious economic implications than in the past. In short, societal functions are becoming more vulnerable.

As part of the Delta programme, measures are now being developed to make fresh water systems more robust and able to cope with larger fluctuations in the volume of water in the major rivers. National government is responsible for water distribution in times of drought, applying a pre-agreed system of prioritization according to need. However, there is as yet no national vision with regard to the creation and management of fresh water provisions, nor any satisfactory risk management system. To what extent can the government manage the demand for fresh water, and to what extent is it actually willing to do so? It is possible to increase the supply of fresh water, but this will be expensive and will do little to offset the risk of drought. What quantities must be available at national and regional level? To what degree should a region be expected to 'fend for itself', and what management instruments are available to enable it to do so?

Water is now regarded as a determining factor within spatial planning policy and practice. Other functions are expected to adapt accordingly. This implies that changes to the location, form and quantity of groundwater and surface water caused by climate change will require us to adapt the way in which we use land itself. This will apply where there is any salification (incurion of salt water), desiccation due to falling water tables, or additional water storage requirements. Practice, however, is rather inflexible. The desire to maintain existing functions results in a conflict of interests between those functions and a water management system which must adapt and compensate the changes, and must do so at ever higher costs.

Can spatial planning at European, national and regional scale help to achieve more efficient fresh water usage, thus diminishing the competition for fresh water? How can the supply-demand balance be restored in the long term, taking climate change and the requirements of the Framework Directive on Water into account? Do current spatial instruments and environmental law provide the necessary basis for doing so? What is the role of the national government? What

will be the consequences of a transition from a supply-led water policy to a demand-led policy?  
The Councils' advisory letter will cover aspects which are the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I).

## **4. Potential topics**

During the discussions about the work programme, a number of topics which may lend themselves to later inclusion were suggested. The current programme therefore allows for further topics to be added, following consultation with the ministers of Infrastructure and the Environment (IENM) Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) and the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) in the latter half of 2011. The topics identified are:

### **Underground space**

The nature of the underground infrastructure is changing. Many important amenities, such as energy transmission systems, are installed below the surface. New functions, such as heat and cold storage systems, ICT connections and CO<sub>2</sub> storage, are being added. Underground space is therefore becoming even more important. A national vision document on the use of underground space is currently in preparation. The Councils will be able to advise on the manner in which such use can be planned and managed effectively, and on the (pre)conditions which must be established.

### **Economic top sectors**

Knowledge institutes, the private sector and the government are working on proposals to give an extra boost to nine designated economic sectors, known as the 'top sectors'. The proposals will lead to concrete action in the short term while they are also likely to raise strategic questions for the longer term.

### **Agriculture**

The forthcoming report of a parliamentary study of 'the economic dimension of rendering food production sustainable', the RLI's own exploratory report on the future of agriculture and horticulture, and the European decisions on agricultural policy to be announced in 2012, will all raise new strategic questions concerning the future of agriculture.

### **Energy efficiency**

Reducing energy consumption is an essential factor in achieving a sustainable energy system. Energy efficiency measures are often less expensive than the production of renewable energy. Many such measures are therefore already cost-effective but are not taken up due to 'split incentives' or a lack of attention and prioritization. What instruments can the market and the government apply to encourage the development of energy efficiency measures, and their adoption by both domestic and commercial users?

### **Public transport from the user's perspective**

The organization of the various forms of public transport (e.g. bus, train and taxi) involves a number of interests and principles, some of which may be conflicting. Efficient use of public resources, the primacy of international connections, the interests of (transport) companies and the prescribed management principles (such as allowing market forces to determine price levels) often play a more important part in policy development than the direct interests of the users themselves. Instruments intended to allow the user's interests to influence decisions have frequently proven ineffective. What is the optimum public transport system from the user's perspective?

### **Where would we be without housing associations?**

The future role and position of the housing associations is currently under discussion. As influential representatives of the societal midfield, the housing associations play a key role in virtually every local housing market. In the long term perspective, does this role promote the development of a fully functional market, or does it have precisely the opposite effect? Are the associations fully equipped for their task or should their working model be adapted in line with

changing circumstances? In short, do the associations deliver what society expects of them, at minimum cost to society, or are there alternative models which will achieve the aims of housing policy more effectively and more efficiently? Questions to be addressed include: what is the basic level? How much should those who wish to rent a association property be expected to pay? How can the associations' assets be put to best possible use in achieving societal objectives? Is government support of the associations and/or their tenants necessary in the long term, and if so what form should it take?

## **5. Concluding remarks**

All the Councils' advisory reports are produced further to a process of open consultation with the relevant stakeholders. To garner the necessary information, opinions and insights, the Councils conduct interviews and working visits, and organize workshops, discussions, expert meetings and roundtable conferences. Current literature is carefully studied. The Councils welcome comments about this work programme, as well as any suggestions which will assist in the production of the advisory reports.